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Evaluation

Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan and global and regional programmes, 2014–2017

Executive summary

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I. Background

1. The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has carried out an evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, global programme and regional programmes (2014-2017). The evaluation is part of the IEO medium-term plan (DP/2014/5) approved by the Executive Board at the first regular session of 2014. This document constitutes an executive summary of the evaluation, provided for consideration by the UNDP Executive Board at its second regular session of 2017. The main report is available at http://web.undp.org/evaluation.

2. The evaluation aims to strengthen UNDP accountability to global and national development partners; support the development of the next strategic plan; and support organizational learning. The outcomes of the Strategic Plan have been reviewed and the implementation of global, regional and country-level programming has been assessed, to ascertain whether UNDP is making progress in achieving its stated goals; and whether the Strategic Plan is serving as an effective tool for guiding UNDP programmes, projects and activities.

3. The evaluation report follows the outline of the Strategic Plan, leading with the three main areas of UNDP development work: sustainable development; governance; and resilience. Not all aspects of UNDP programming are covered. Rather, attention is paid to a select set of outputs and programmes that the evaluation team considers to be important to mention because they are especially significant, new and innovative or especially relevant to the contexts in which UNDP is operating. Gender equality and women's empowerment are cross-cutting aspects of all UNDP programming as are the efforts to foster South-South and triangular partnerships and build new partnerships, including with the private sector. The evaluation also considers the performance of UNDP under the fifth global programme and five regional programmes. Findings at the regional level have been aggregated to identify common issues. In addition, the evaluation assesses how UNDP has progressed in enhancing institutional effectiveness through various strategies during the current Strategic Plan, building on the joint assessment of institutional effectiveness conducted by IEO and the Office of Audit and Investigations in 2016.

4. While the Strategic Plan does not have an overarching theory of change, each of its seven outcomes has a theory of change that sets out intended roles and contributions, assumptions, risks and drivers of change. The evaluation sets out an aggregated theory of change to frame the results of UNDP programme support and consider approaches taken, the process of contribution and the significance of the UNDP contribution.

5. The evaluation used multiple data collection and analysis methods and took an iterative approach to gather and analyse multiple perspectives to measure UNDP performance. Evidence has been obtained and triangulated from document reviews, meta-analysis of evaluations and audits, regional and country case study missions, interviews, focus groups and surveys. The analysis covers the work of UNDP in 90 country programmes, five regional hubs and one subregional office, three global centres and the two global shared service centres (in Kuala Lumpur and Copenhagen). Approximately 1,000 development actors were interviewed and 30 countries visited across all regions.

6. During the Strategic Plan period, the IEO carried out a series of thematic evaluations, the results of which anchor this report. These include evaluations of UNDP contributions to fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals (2015); Human Development Reports (2015); the small grants programme of UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) (2015); protected areas management by UNDP and GEF (2015); gender equality and women's empowerment (2015); mine action (2015); anti-corruption (2016); disabilities-inclusive development (2016); and institutional effectiveness (2017). Each of these evaluations received a management response, including actions planned in response to recommendations.

7. Data from the UNDP results-based management system, the Integrated Results and Resources Framework and the Atlas enterprise resource planning system (the UNDP financial management system) have been taken into consideration. The evaluation team reviewed the midterm review of the Strategic Plan (2016) as well as country office reporting and decentralized evaluations. National development strategies and country-level publications and documents of national and international agencies have been assessed as pertinent to specific analyses.

II. Contribution to development results

Strategic planning

8. The overarching objectives of UNDP continue to be appropriate and relevant, and the organization's increasingly integrated, multifaceted approach to development challenges is well suited to, and consistent with, United Nations priorities and the needs of national partners. UNDP has taken measures to reconstitute its programme teams globally to facilitate integrated approaches to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. For 50 years, UNDP has kept a universal presence; however, the evaluation recognizes that the added value of the UNDP presence is perceived to be eroding in some middle-income countries, as country offices with limited resources struggle to maintain enough staff and make relevant contributions to development. The continued relevance of UNDP in a large majority of countries needs more appropriate programme models and funding to respond to context specificities. In middle-income countries where UNDP has found a way to maintain its relevance, country offices have focused on becoming a partner in the area of policy, with more upstream initiatives at national level producing neutral and quality knowledge products, positioning the organization as a key partner for its thought leadership, convening power and ability to introduce issues and sensitive themes into policy debate and work as a broker between government and civil society to stimulate debate, build consensus and push for change. To counterbalance, downstream initiatives are more directed towards the subnational level where capacity development is still needed.

Sustainable development

10. One important change from the previous UNDP Strategic Plan was the coupling of poverty reduction and environment into a combined area of work on sustainable development pathways, which positioned UNDP well for supporting the efforts of national partners to meet the Millennium Development Goals and prepare for the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP support to fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals was particularly relevant and effective during the several years leading up to 2015, with the roll-out of the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework. Since 2015, the effort has shifted towards the broader and more extensive Sustainable Development Goals. It is too early in this process to assess the support that UNDP is providing to countries on fulfilment of the Goals, other than to note the promising work of UNDP, together with other partners in the United Nations development system, on the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support programme, which assists countries in harmonizing the Goals with national planning priorities.

11. The overarching objective of UNDP continues to be its focus on the poorest of the poor and most marginalized around the world. Evidence suggests that UNDP has embedded a multidimensional perspective of poverty across national and global debates, creating enabling environments to help Governments to develop pro-poor policies and expanding local capacities for pro-poor policymaking and social protection. There are also concerns that UNDP sometimes settles too easily for small-scale livelihood interventions that do not scale up, and that its results and reporting frameworks are not paying sufficient attention to the sustainability of jobs created. UNDP needs to align better its resources and programming with its stated objective: supporting the poorest of the poor and most marginalized members of society, capitalizing on lessons learned to accelerate development results specifically for those left behind.

12. The evaluation concluded that UNDP is a leading United Nations provider of environmental protection support at national and local levels, which now includes services to help countries adapt to climate change, and has been a significant provider of technical support to Member States during global and regional negotiations on environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss and water pollution. During this Strategic Plan period, UNDP has managed over one third of GEF projects and a similar percentage of projects under the new Green Climate Fund. UNDP is well regarded for its management of these projects, and for its efforts to establish strong partnerships and generate significant co-financing, and capacity to adapt to contextual changes during project implementation. It is through environmental services that UNDP works most directly at the community level, through its management of the GEF small grants programme. The evaluation also acknowledges UNDP achievements in assisting countries to promote greater energy efficiency and more sustainable energy production, focusing on energy development and services to poor and rural communities.

13. UNDP has a long-standing climate programme and is considered a global leader in the provision of adaptation services, as recognized by the considerable financial resources it has secured through the GEF, Green Climate Fund and other sources. The UNDP national and subnational scope of service, urban and rural development planning, governance, risk-assessment capabilities, experience managing multi-partner trust funds and decades of experience in environmental protection and disaster risk reduction and recovery work provide a platform from which to assist countries with this global development challenge.

Democratic governance

14. The evaluation found that UNDP governance support filled critical gaps in countries that face significant systemic challenges in their efforts to improve governance. Evidence indicates that UNDP is an important service provider of democratic governance and public administration support, helping to solidify peaceful and resilient State-society relations. It is the area of work where UNDP raises and expends about half of its resource (48 per cent), primarily for institutional strengthening for basic services, as well as accountability, the rule of law, electoral systems and peacebuilding. UNDP is well positioned to promote governance reform, yet it can do more to push for inclusive and accountable processes.

15. UNDP has helped to strengthen processes for more structured and transparent engagement of parliaments with government and civil society. UNDP is well positioned in providing expert electoral support to Governments and electoral management bodies. UNDP advocated for more credible and inclusive electoral processes, more representative parliaments with stronger legislative and oversight functions and increased citizen voice, and how to localize Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels). UNDP continues to be a global leader in the provision of parliamentary support with an increasing number of countries assisted and an enhanced focus on issue-based approaches. There have been improvements in parliamentary strategies and the capacities of parliamentary staff in areas such as legal drafting, oversight and institutionalized mechanisms for public hearings. UNDP is perceived as a reliable intermediary and neutral convener, which is crucial for engagement on democratic governance issues. UNDP does not always leverage this comparative advantage, which reduced its overall contribution to strengthening electoral systems.

16. The evaluation notes achievements in areas such as anti-corruption, open governance and facilitating local-level access to public information, particularly initiatives that facilitated citizens' utilization of information to engage in local planning and governance. UNDP contributed to enhancing the role of citizens and community-based organizations in local development planning, giving voice to the needs of women and children, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups. The evaluation also identifies specific areas where UNDP plays a direct role in government services, such as the provision of financial and operational management support for health-care systems through the Global

Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. UNDP efforts to secure the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have placed it at the forefront of core government capacity development efforts.

17. The evaluation calls attention to the work of UNDP to help Governments improve their civil service processes, especially in countries that have been in crisis, yet concerns are raised that UNDP programming often results in a parallel system of government staff paid through UNDP, and therefore outside of the national civil service, which risks undermining civil service reform efforts and government accountability. It is consequently recommended that in its programming requirements, UNDP ensure that capacity-related programming does not carry over from phase to phase without evidence of increasing government capacity and national ownership. UNDP should not undermine national civil services through long-term, off-budget advisory support.

18. UNDP has carved out a vital role in governance support to countries affected by conflict. UNDP contributions across areas of governance in peacebuilding and State-building support have been substantial in the provision of specialist technical expertise along with human resource support to government institutions. UNDP has, to its credit and that of partner Governments, sought to address the most intractable structural causes of conflict. UNDP played a leading role in enhancing the role of youth in peace and security processes, particularly the implementation of Security Council resolution 2250 (2015). UNDP support in countries affected by conflict has been crucial for the functioning of core governance institutions and consolidating stability and peace while transitioning to development. The UNDP strategy to address pressing capacity issues in the early phase of institutional formation has been appropriate in countries affected by conflict. During the initial stages of State-building, UNDP has played a crucial role, serving as a fiduciary (and procurement) manager in the absence of government capacity. As Governments in countries affected by conflict have weak financial management systems, UNDP procurement and service delivery support has helped to minimize misuse of development funds.

19. The UNDP contributions to justice sector reforms have been important enablers of capacities to allow justice institutions to function. Typical of countries affected by conflict, the low human resource base and lack of basic infrastructure are challenges. The convening role that UNDP has played in gathering diverse justice stakeholders around common reform themes and strategic planning is significant. UNDP has effectively advocated and supported anti-discrimination legislation and issues in some countries that have improved the situation for ethnic minorities, persons living with a disability or with HIV and AIDS, and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender persons. Enhancing citizen security has been an important component of UNDP rule of law initiatives, including for community-oriented policing and the reduction of illicit arms in countries affected by conflict. Improved capacities of government institutions helped strengthen the legitimacy of the State and enabled better service delivery.

20. The evaluation recognizes that UNDP during this plan period has made a concerted effort to work more collaboratively with Security Council-mandated peacekeeping missions, thereby bringing a more developmental approach to joint peacebuilding and State-building efforts and smoothing post-mission transitions.

Resilience

21. UNDP is the preferred agency for many nations seeking redevelopment support when conflict and disaster occur. It is the space where UNDP has significant latitude to support major changes in national development policy, and where nations look to UNDP for advice on how to build back better.

22. UNDP continues to play an important role both in crisis risk reduction and recovery. In the case of risk reduction, the evaluation concludes that funding remains a stumbling block, which is not unique to UNDP but is an issue for most organizations working in this area. Nevertheless, UNDP is considered a valued partner in risk reduction and its contributions have been important to quantifying and ranking risks and to preparedness. Disaster risk

reduction is an area that has important synergies with the rapidly expanding UNDP climate change adaptation support to countries.

23. The evaluation confirms the UNDP Crisis Response Unit has been effective at deploying staff and consultant resources, and at quickly releasing initial funding to get recovery programmes moving. There is continued logic and value to the UNDP contribution as the chair of the Early Recovery Cluster. UNDP is working collaboratively with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Refugees and other humanitarian agencies in response to crises such as the Syrian crisis, where human migrations overwhelm municipal services in host communities. The evaluation identifies "cash for work" programmes as interventions that often receive too much attention in early recovery engagements, at the expense of planning and coordination support where UNDP is especially needed. Furthermore, the mechanisms in place for quick response to crisis are less suitable to slow-onset crises, requiring UNDP to consider new systems and methods.

24. UNDP work in resilience has evolved and been restructured during this plan period. The evaluation found that the institutional restructuring that occurred dissolved a well-recognized and integrated crisis prevention and recovery bureau. While there were compelling reasons behind consolidating policy functions and merging the two global policy bureaux, for instance to reduce programmatic overlap and redundancy, this move disrupted UNDP service offerings in the risk reduction and recovery space, and in the process, UNDP lost talent and experience that is yet to be recovered.

25. How UNDP addresses resilience in the future is under discussion as the next strategic plan is being drafted. It will be very useful for UNDP to retain resilience as a distinct area of work under the plan, so that stakeholders see this remain a core area of the UNDP service offering. It will be important for UNDP to revisit its restructuring of the policy bureaux as the current set-up should be weighed against the advantages of having a dedicated support system in place to respond comprehensively to crisis risk reduction and recovery needs.

Financial aspects of UNDP programming during the period of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017

26. During the Strategic Plan period, UNDP has spent a little over $12 billion on programmes, out of a total budget of $14.9 billion. The two current main areas of UNDP focus, sustainable development pathways and governance for peaceful and inclusive societies, show a decline in programme expenditure, while resilience and recovery expenditures increased over the same period.

27. Regular resources comprised about 10 per cent of development programme expenditure in the period 2014–2016. These resources, sometimes referred to as "core funds", are contributions provided to UNDP that are pooled and untied. Since 2014, there has been an 18 per cent decline in the amount of core funding expended, continuing a downward trend during the decade. This decline has wide implications for the organization and has led to a robust effort to identify new sources of revenue. Other resources (non-core) funding of approximately $4billion in expenditures each year, are provided by a wide array of donors for specific programming. These expenditures declined in 2016, although this cannot be considered a trend.

28. In the sustainable development pathways programme area, programme expenditures have been divided relatively equally between outputs linked to poverty and livelihoods programmes and those linked to environment, climate change and energy. Programmes targeting structural transformation of productive capacities and sustainable management of natural resources were the largest output areas.

29. In the governance for peaceful and inclusive societies area, one third of UNDP expenditures (34 per cent) was spent on programmes focusing on the rule of law and security sector. A large portion of it, however, was linked to citizen security programmes in Afghanistan. The second largest output area was for service delivery, especially strengthening capacities for service delivery at the subnational/local level. HIV/AIDS programmes were the

third largest group (23 per cent), mostly programmes funded by the Global Fund in Africa. Lastly, programmes focusing on State-building represented 13 per cent of total spending in this thematic area. Almost one half of the expenditures focused on institutional strengthening in countries affected by conflict.

30. In the resilience area, 58 per cent of expenditures went to early recovery programmes, a large part of which was spent on the output area of early economic revitalization. The Arab States region accounted for the largest share of these expenditures. The remaining 42 per cent of expenditures for resilience were focused on peacebuilding and disaster risk management. Expenditures are increasingly focused on the Arab States, with growing programmes in Iraq, Lebanon, State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Cross-cutting programmatic issues

31. The Strategic Plan sets expectations for UNDP work on gender and women's empowerment, as well as various partnerships, including South-South cooperation.

32. Regarding gender, the evaluation concludes that there have been incremental improvements in the UNDP gender equality and women's empowerment policy, institutional measures and programming during this period, and that UNDP work at the global and regional levels takes a strong analytical approach, seeking to identify gaps and good practices to inform gender-related policy and advocacy. UNDP has supported the improvement of economic opportunities for women, helping to usher in upstream policy reforms and downstream microcredit schemes and employment opportunities. Democratic governance programme support has demonstrated strong gender-inclusive approaches.

33. The evaluation notes some weaknesses in efforts focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. There have been limitations in the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy, both in terms of providing resources to support gender programming and in mainstreaming gender equality across UNDP programme areas. New management processes and mechanisms, corporate accountability and improvements in the gender architecture, such as locating experts in regional hubs and multidisciplinary focal teams in country offices, have yet to lead to meaningful improvements in gender programming and mainstreaming. The current level of support to gender-responsive crisis risk reduction and response efforts is insufficient. There is also a need for closer arrangements and clearer expectations regarding UNDP cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). UNDP should strengthen implementation of its gender policies, take measures to ensure adequate funding to mainstream gender across all programming areas and not confine gender-related work to a gender team.

34. UNDP has clarified its corporate structure and defined more precisely its operational approaches to South-South and triangular cooperation through the Strategic Plan. The recently adopted South-South and triangular cooperation strategy has the potential to provide improved direction to manage and facilitate South-South knowledge exchange at the country level. Challenges remain in the mainstreaming of South-South cooperation in UNDP country-level programming, and UNDP has yet to prioritize thematic areas where South-South exchanges will be pursued more systematically. The report draws attention to the need to improve knowledge management on South-South cooperation, especially drawing lessons that UNDP country offices can use to expand such partnerships. The UNDP role as administrative agent for the United Nations Office for South-South cooperation is acknowledged in this report, along with recent improvements made to the office's planning and management.

35. The evaluation recognizes that achieving the ambitious targets in the Strategic Plan requires robust funding as well as programmatic partnerships. A challenge to expanding partnerships is the lack of a nuanced strategy for developing new long-term partnerships and non-traditional funding mechanisms, although the report acknowledges pilot efforts underway to test innovative mechanisms such as impact investment and crowd-sourcing. UNDP has

been engaging with the private sector, especially through environmental programming, as well as livelihoods and social protection, and has established due diligence procedures to safeguard these efforts. The evaluation concludes that further engagement with the private sector can leverage significant new funding, including through large corporate social responsibility initiatives. UNDP will need to assess these opportunities against their financial and reputational risks.

36. UNDP partnerships with other United Nations agencies continue to expand, with examples of effective multi-agency partnerships including the Spanish Millennium Development Goal Fund and the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Results from "Delivering as One" pilot countries and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process suggest that more work is needed to harmonize systems before joint programming can be done routinely, effectively and efficiently. UNDP joint programming with its two affiliated organizations, the United Nations Volunteers programme and United Nations Capital Development Fund, have grown, with positive results. Finally, UNDP partnerships with environmental and health system "vertical" funds have been mutually advantageous.

Global and regional programmes

37. The evaluation analysed the contribution of the fifth global programme and the five regional programmes. With respect to the global programme, the evaluation notes that it fulfils the function of supporting staff positions at UNDP headquarters and the regional hubs that are essential for policy support to UNDP programmes, particularly country offices. The contributions of the policy and technical staff enabled UNDP global advocacy and thought leadership to government partners in the run-up to pivotal international agreements including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The report recommends that UNDP change the global programme into a service line for supporting staff positions at global and regional levels.

38. The global programme supports six global policy centres, which were established at different points of time in the past decade. The centres provide research support, organize technical workshops and enable UNDP to leverage partnerships for global policy engagement. There is greater potential for the global policy centres to facilitate knowledge exchange across the organization and to support UNDP in its global policy and advocacy roles.

39. With respect to regional programming, progress has been made in developing a coherent regional response in the five regions and consolidating policy support. The diversity of country offices' programme support requirements is too wide and specialized, and funding constraints have meant that regional hubs have had to make hard staffing choices that leave advisory gaps.

40. The regional programmes have made special efforts to support new approaches to development solutions. The evaluation finds that innovative techniques to meet development needs have been launched in many regions, including new ways to capture and utilize knowledge. Challenges remain in the application of knowledge and lessons for improved programming, and additional efforts are needed to more systematically promote innovation and knowledge management at the regional level.

41. Regional programming is an important asset for engaging countries on sensitive issues, such as anti-corruption and citizen voice, although care is needed to avoid overlap between regional and country-level programing. While regional programmes enabled country offices to pursue issues that could be sensitive for them to initiate, the lack of a regional dimension limited these initiatives in many cases. Cross-border initiatives are valuable additions to regional programmes, but such efforts need further consolidation. Too many country-related activities have diluted the regional focus.

42. Regional programmes successfully fostered strategic partnerships with new agreements and funding. The regional programme for Africa has had a clear regional orientation, focused

on strengthening the capacities of regional intergovernmental institutions, building regional normative frameworks and fostering knowledge management. In the Asia and Pacific region, while not all areas that are priorities for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation match those of UNDP, there has been engagement on mutually reinforcing development agendas, such as the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP is also expanding its partnerships with regional institutions elsewhere, such as with the League of Arab States. A strength of the regional programmes is their emphasis on subregional priorities and specific measures to support them.

43. The evaluation notes that although the regional programme model is an effective modality and UNDP is well positioned to play a convening role at the regional level on development issues, the UNDP organizational restructuring posed additional challenges to the achievement of results.

Institutional effectiveness

44. The Strategic Plan sets out expectations for higher-quality programming; greater organizational openness, agility and adaptability to harness knowledge, solutions and expertise; and improved management of human and financial resources. The evaluation reports on achievements in these areas, building also from a recent joint assessment on institutional effectiveness conducted by IEO and OAI.

45. Evidence suggests there are signs of improvement at UNDP in terms of higher-quality programming, openness, agility and adaptability, but these have had limited impact on harnessing knowledge, solutions and expertise to improve results and institutional effectiveness, as envisaged in the Strategic Plan. To better promote a results culture, UNDP leadership should encourage an environment that welcomes critical reflection and continuous organizational learning for improved results and institutional effectiveness. Investment in results-based management and knowledge management should be prioritized. Beyond reporting for compliance and capturing best practices, the focus should be on using lessons learned to harness knowledge, solutions and expertise to improve results and effectiveness. In building this culture, UNDP should also improve transparency and communication at the most senior levels of the organization, to encourage and improve openness and engagement.

46. With respect to human resources management, the evaluation considers that the Office of Human Resources is limited in its ability to contribute effectively to institutional effectiveness, as it is not part of formal high-level decision-making structures and as such cannot make sufficient and timely input into corporate strategic and budgetary decisions which may affect country office results. UNDP should increase the involvement of the Office of Human Resources in strategic decision-making, especially in future institutional restructuring. Given the increasing complexity of programme delivery, inter-agency work and collaboration with a range of partners including civil society, investment in developing skills in leadership and management across complex systems should be prioritized.

47. Although UNDP is now a leaner and more cost-conscious organization, there has been insufficient progress on results-based budgeting, and the organization's financial sustainability is challenged by diminishing regular resources, inadequate funding models and exchange rate losses. UNDP should transition from political budgeting to a more risk- and results-based budgeting process, so that results are more effectively linked to resources to help mobilize funds and better highlight investment gaps to donors. UNDP should also work with funders and influence groups to raise understanding of the unintended effects of reductions in core funding. UNDP is being held accountable to a corporate strategic plan without predictable and adequate resources. Focus should be on bringing the donor community together to work more effectively on multidimensional integrated approaches to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, while contributing to partner country priorities.

III. Conclusions

Conclusion 1

48. The current Strategic Plan builds on previous plans to narrow the UNDP development mandate while maintaining flexibility to adjust to local needs. The integrated approach taken is well suited to the overarching objectives of UNDP and consistent with United Nations priorities. It enables the organization to provide a multifaceted response to development support requests from national partners.

Conclusion 2

49. The presence of UNDP in middle-income countries remains relevant but is increasingly challenged by diminishing regular resources. This financial reality stretches the sometimes tenuous connection between the long-term strategic aims of UNDP and its programme expectations, calling into question the relevance of the Strategic Plan in some contexts.

Conclusion 3

50. UNDP played a positive supporting role to Governments in fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, with particular value during the later stages, helping countries accelerate their efforts as the 2015 deadline loomed. UNDP is now broadening this assistance to integrate and prioritize the Sustainable Development Goals into national development planning.

Conclusion 4

51. UNDP has made a difference by embedding a multidimensional perspective of poverty in national and global debates: creating enabling environments to help Governments develop pro-poor policies; and expanding local capacities for pro-poor policymaking. UNDP has in some cases settled too easily for small-scale livelihood interventions that do not scale up and may be more suitable for other actors.

Conclusion 5

52. UNDP has continued to enhance its standing as a country-level implementer of a range of environmental programmes, including on climate change, biodiversity loss, water pollution, land degradation and the control of persistent organic pollutants. UNDP has a long-standing climate programme and is considered a global leader in the provision of adaptation services, as recognized by the considerable financial resources it has secured through the GEF, Green Climate Fund and other sources.

Conclusion 6

53. UNDP contributed to strengthening institutions and reform processes, including by filling critical gaps in countries facing significant systemic challenges in public administration, service delivery and democratic governance. Banking on incremental approaches and cumulative impacts did not always enable a sustained increase in governance capacities.

Conclusion 7

54. UNDP has successfully established its niche as a trusted and reliable intermediary and neutral convener on democratic governance issues. UNDP appears reluctant at times to take advantage of its trusted position and push for more inclusive and accountable government processes. By taking an overly cautious approach, UNDP risks missing opportunities to trigger significant governance reforms. In delivering governance assistance and capacity-building, the issue of norms and the UNDP role in upholding them needs to be addressed.

Conclusion 8:

55. In countries affected by conflict, UNDP specialist technical expertise and human resource support has enabled core governance institutions to function, which is critical for consolidating stability and peace and transitioning to development. More sustained efforts are needed to support sector-specific capacity-development strategies and a systematic approach to strengthening core institutional capacities.

Conclusion 9

56. UNDP has made a concerted effort to work more collaboratively with peacekeeping missions mandated by the Security Council. This brings a more developmental approach to joint peacebuilding and State-building efforts, helping to smooth post-mission transitions.

Conclusion 10

57. In the early stages of crisis recovery, UNDP capacity-building support has helped to stabilize national institutions by working successfully with government partners to address immediate needs. Yet funding and operational constraints often limit progress during the longer transitional phase back to peaceful development, impeding national efforts to address the structural causes of conflict.

Conclusion 11

58. Structural changes involving establishment of a single global policy bureau for policy and programme support and a small, free-standing crisis response unit have weakened the programme coherence of UNDP and its service offering on crisis risk reduction and recovery.

Conclusion 12

59. UNDP is providing valuable services to national partners on disaster risk reduction strategies, and is especially well positioned to develop contextual analyses at the country level. Funding support for risk reduction remains weak.

Conclusion 13

60. UNDP is considered an especially valued partner in the aftermath of conflicts and disasters, as countries look to recover and rebuild. It has increased the pace and quality of its early recovery and transitional development services. Yet the organization remains ad hoc in its response to crises and focuses too much effort on short-term employment creation and cash assistance programming. This diverts attention from the more complex but critical planning and governance-related aspects of recovery where UNDP support is especially needed.

Conclusion 14

61. UNDP has more effectively organized and promoted its work on gender equality and women's empowerment, but faces continuing challenges in mainstreaming this work across the organization and meeting relevant corporate financial and results targets.

Conclusion 15

62. UNDP has strengthened its commitment to South-South cooperation through the development of a corporate strategy and continued administrative support to the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. There remains a lack of prioritization and systematic use of South-South and triangular cooperation, and limited sharing of knowledge.

Conclusion 16

63. The global programme fulfils an important policy support function and has enabled UNDP to maintain intellectual engagement in the global development arena by participating in major international events and channeling country-level lessons to global agreements. The programme's results framework and indicators are excessive in their expectations, which cover the breadth of UNDP work under the Strategic Plan, including country-level results. The global programme is more a funding line to support staff positions for achieving corporate-wide results than a distinct global programme.

Conclusion 17

64. Progress has been made in developing a coherent regional response across the five regional programmes. To differing degrees, each of the regional programmes has expanded support for new approaches and innovative solutions and promoted subregional programming. The potential of the regional programmes to facilitate a holistic response to regional engagement and country office support is not fully realized. Although the regional programme model is an effective modality to support regional initiatives, it is constrained by its large scope. In some regions there remain too many country-related activities that overlap

with country office programming. Further attention is needed for regional public goods and services and management of cross-border externalities.

Conclusion 18

65. There are signs that UNDP is improving both the quality of its programming and its openness, agility and adaptability. But these have had limited impact on harnessing knowledge, solutions and expertise due to insufficient investment in results-based management and knowledge management and an excessive focus on compliance rather than organizational learning.

Conclusion 19

66. The Office of Human Resources is limited in its ability to contribute effectively to institutional effectiveness, as it is not part of formal high-level decision-making structures and as such cannot make sufficient and timely input into corporate-level strategic and budgetary decisions that may affect country office results.

Conclusion 20

67. The financial sustainability of UNDP is challenged by declining resources that are mostly tied to specific funder objectives, inadequate funding models and exchange rate losses. This situation makes it increasingly difficult for UNDP to work in an integrated fashion, break down silos and align projects to the priorities of the Strategic Plan. Although UNDP is now a leaner and more cost-conscious organization, additional and more effective clustering of operational functions could have further lowered UNDP transaction costs and generated further efficiencies and economies of scale. UNDP has made insufficient progress on results-based budgeting, and does not effectively cost solutions or assess programmatic value for money.

IV. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

68. Support for fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals should be a cross-cutting issue for all UNDP country offices. Integrated approaches to development are essential for fulfilment of the Goals and should be pursued where possible, taking national contexts and implementation efficiency into consideration.

Recommendation 2

69. The overarching strategic objective of UNDP — supporting the poorest of the poor and the most marginalized members of society — remains valid. Future resources and programming should aim to help countries accelerate the achievement of development results especially for those left behind, based on fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Recommendation 3

70. UNDP should retain its global reach. Programming in middle-income countries should align with the Sustainable Development Goals and other global frameworks, placing vulnerable populations at the forefront while seizing opportunities to expand assistance at subnational levels.

Recommendation 4

71. UNDP should strongly emphasize its climate change adaptation capabilities and services in the next strategic plan. The UNDP national and subnational scope of service, capabilities for urban and rural development planning, governance and risk assessment, experience managing multi-partner trust funds and decades of environmental protection and disaster risk reduction and recovery work provide a platform from which to ably assist national and subnational governments to meet this global development challenge. Specific attention should be paid to the climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction linkages.

Recommendation 5

72. Recognizing that governance is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP should be proactive in supporting sectoral governance approaches and more persuasive in promoting democratic governance reforms.

Recommendation 6

73. Analysis of institutional capacities at the national level should guide UNDP governance programming in countries affected by conflict. Governance support needs to be targeted to critical government functions that are essential to stability. UNDP should more strategically support Sustainable Development Goal 16 and related intergovernmental agreements on peacebuilding and State-building.

Recommendation 7

74. UNDP should retain resilience as a distinct area of work under the next strategic plan so that stakeholders see this remaining a core area of the UNDP service offering. To strengthen the coherence of its crisis risk-reduction and recovery support, UNDP should continue to refine the roles and scope of service of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support and the Crisis Response Unit.

Recommendation 8

75. UNDP should strengthen implementation of its gender policies, taking measures to ensure adequate funding to mainstream gender across all programming areas. Work on gender equality and women's empowerment should not be confined to a gender team alone but should ensure that all large programmes have dedicated gender expertise. Specific attention needs to be paid to such areas as environment, energy and crisis response, where gender mainstreaming remains weak.

Recommendation 9

76. UNDP should take a more systematic approach to South-South cooperation, selecting specific areas and partners for expanded cooperation.

Recommendation 10

77. UNDP should change the global programme to a service line for supporting staff positions at global and regional levels, as its shared deliverables and blurred boundaries make it unsuitable as a specific programme.

Recommendation 11

78. UNDP should determine specialties within its sustainable development, governance and resilience areas of work. This will help it to build world-class technical expertise and focus its resources on building capacities in those areas.

Recommendation 12

79. UNDP should reassess the roles and financial sustainability of the regional hubs, striving to make them centres of excellence for innovation and learning while expanding cooperation and partnerships with regional institutions. It should reduce overlap between regional and country-level programming.

Recommendation 13

80. Regional programming, if better defined, has the potential to be a valuable tool to prioritize and organize UNDP regional engagement and support to country offices. UNDP should develop its regional programmes as frameworks, outlining the regional issues to be addressed and approaches to be followed. To maximize its activities at the regional level and position UNDP to make a meaningful contribution, there should be more focus on a select number of areas at the regional level. For regional programmes to be effective, the activities that are considered should be realistic and pay sufficient attention to regionality principles.

Recommendation 14

81. UNDP should promote a results culture that encourages critical reflection and continuous organizational learning for improved results and institutional effectiveness.

Recommendation 15

82. UNDP should increase the involvement of the Office of Human Resources in strategic decision-making, especially in future institutional restructuring. Given the increasing complexity of programme delivery, inter-agency work and collaboration with a range of partners including civil society, investment in developing skills in leadership, relationship management and management across complex systems should be prioritized.

Recommendation 16

83. UNDP should transition from political budgeting to a more risk- and results-based budgeting process, to more effectively link results to resources. This will help mobilize funds and better highlight investment gaps to donors. UNDP is being held accountable to a corporate strategic plan without predictable and adequate resources. UNDP should work with funders and influence groups to raise understanding of the unintended effects of reductions in core funding. Focus should be on bringing the donor community together to work more effectively on integrated multidimensional approaches to support fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, while contributing to partner country priorities.

United Nations DP/2017/33

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Evaluation

Management response to the evaluation of the Strategic Plan, global programme and regional programmes, 2014-2017

Context, background and findings

1. In accordance with the medium-term evaluation plan for 2014-2017 endorsed by the Executive Board in decision 2014/4, in 2017 the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) conducted an evaluation of the Strategic Plan, global programme and regional programmes to review UNDP development results and inform the next strategic plan. The evaluation was preceded by the assessment of institutional effectiveness led jointly by IEO and the Office for Audit and Investigations (OAI), the findings and recommendations of which were presented to the Executive Board at the 2017 annual session, with the management response.

2. The evaluation was guided by five parameters and corresponding criteria measuring the success of UNDP in: (a) identifying issues consistent with its mandate and strategically positioning the organization; (b) contributing to national and subnational policies, institutional capacities and resources; (c) establishing and maintaining policy and interinstitutional dialogues; (d) mobilizing actors to address relevant development and crisis-related issues; and (e) enabling partnerships to accelerate development progress. Ten questions were used to measure the extent to which UNDP has succeeded to drive change in the areas prioritized by the Strategic Plan including in crisis and post-crisis settings; what specific contributions it made to strengthening national institutional and human capacities, situating norms and facilitating adoption and implementation of norms and practices in all types of contexts; what institutional measures were effective in enhancing UNDP performance; and what roles UNDP played in influencing global and regional dialogues, coordinating the United Nations system through the resident coordinator function and establishing global, regional and country-level partnerships.

3. UNDP management notes and appreciates the comprehensive IEO approach to data and evidence collection through over 30 country case studies, additional desk reviews and surveys and over 1,000 interviews with UNDP staff, implementing partners and other relevant actors. The report also integrates findings and recommendations of the thematic evaluations conducted within the framework of the current Strategic Plan which UNDP is already addressing through the management responses that the Executive Board has approved.

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4. UNDP management welcomes the evaluation and agrees overall with its findings, conclusions and recommendations which will be duly taken into account in the strategic plan, 2018-2021 and in related projects, programmes and efforts to strengthen institutional effectiveness and performance. Regular updates on the status of implementation of the management response will be made available publicly in the Evaluation Resource Centre in accordance with the evaluation policy.

5. Key engagement principles that guided the formulation and implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 highlighted the UNDP commitment to new ways of programming at all levels including through empowering the poor, giving voice and opportunities to the marginalized through partnerships with civil society, the private sector and other non-State actors, mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment and broadening South-South and triangular cooperation.

6. The 2014-2016 cumulative review of the Strategic Plan that was presented to the Executive Board at the 2017 annual session (DP/2017/15) reported that UNDP development results were on track, with progress achieved for 32 of the 38 outputs representing 75 per cent or more of the total results expected by 2017. For five of the six remaining outputs, progress ranged from 62 to 74 per cent of the 2017 targets, due to external factors (funding delays, changes in government priorities or counterparts, natural disasters, deteriorating security situations) and/or suboptimal risk management and unrealistic target setting. UNDP management believes that the actual development performance is owed equally to the consolidation of corporate policy and programme support functions and to the great progress in programme alignment, both at country level with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and corporately with the Strategic Plan, as also noted by the assessment of institutional effectiveness. The stronger alignment and quality programming helped the organization to advance delivery on its promises despite the increasingly constrained resource environment and growing social and environmental fragility.

7. In terms of its commitment to building a results culture through higher quality of programmes and projects, evidence-based programme management, accountability and learning, UNDP management is pleased to acknowledge that according to the 2016 partnership survey, 66 per cent of partners consider that UNDP delivers high-quality programmes, an increase of 5 per cent over 2015, and 62 per cent believe that UNDP applies a robust results framework, up 6 per cent from 2015. The number of partners considering that UNDP delivers "value for money" and is cost-effective has also increased by 5 per cent.

Findings and conclusions regarding UNDP development results

8. UNDP management notes with appreciation the evaluation's extensive recognition of the organization's critical role and achievements across areas of intervention and development contexts, and remains committed to continuing progress towards poverty eradication, conflict prevention, peacebuilding and resilience as fundamental pillars of sustainable development. The relevance of the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support (MAPS) approach to integrating the Sustainable Development Goals in national plans and programmes, as stressed by the evaluation, has been confirmed by Governments and partners. Since August 2016, UNDP has completed 15 MAPS missions, with another 17 to be conducted by end-2017 with increasing participation of United Nations agencies and development partners.

9. Owing to the direct engagement of UNDP, the UNDAF guidance adopted in 2017 integrates MAPS as a system-wide methodology and tool for implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a systematic, evidence-informed and results-focused manner.

10. Furthermore, for policy coherence and effective country support, in line with General Assembly resolution 71/243 of 21 December 2016 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR), in the formulation of their next strategic plans (2018-2021), four funds and programmes, including UNDP, committed to collaborative approaches in the five priority areas of poverty eradication; gender equality and women's empowerment; prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace; climate change; and sustainable data.

Joint work and results monitoring will trickle down to country programmes and projects to enhance contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainable development pathways

11. UNDP management is very pleased to note the evaluation's positive findings regarding the critical UNDP contribution to poverty reduction in the current Strategic Plan through a multidimensional approach that includes designing and establishing sustainable social protection systems; coupling of poverty reduction and environmental protection for sustainable development; increasing investment in productive capacities; and improved management of social and natural capital and risks. As reflected in the report on the implementation of recommendations of the evaluation of the UNDP contribution to poverty reduction (DP/2016/26) presented to the Executive Board at the 2016 second regular session, UNDP has strengthened its engagement with civil society on poverty issues, including through the Civil Society Advisory Committee, and adopted a multidisciplinary, targeted approach to poverty reduction through all programmes and projects.

12. The sustainability of results enabled by UNDP, including jobs created and livelihoods supported, is an important component of the quality standards used to assess programmes and projects from design to closure. Rigorous gender analyses in the formulation of programmes and projects and the inclusion of gender results and the gender marker are corporate requirements for all UNDP interventions. Management commitments made in response to the 2015 independent evaluation of the UNDP contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment are thoroughly monitored and reported to the Executive Board through both the annual report of the Administrator and the report on the implementation of the gender equality strategy. Under the new gender strategy for the period 2018-2021, UNDP will continue to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment in all programmes and projects, pursue commitments under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and use the Gender Seal to promote behavior change in both the public and private domains.

13. Recognizing the importance of targeting development interventions for sustainable results, UNDP, in consultation with other United Nations funds and programmes, has prepared a methodology to identify excluded categories and improve targeting to ensure no one is left behind. The methodology will be used in the formulation of the new results and resources frameworks and systematic monitoring of all programmes and projects.

14. UNDP management also wishes to clarify that the process of introducing environmental and social safeguards in programming was initiated in 2008, before the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) had safeguard policies in place. In response to the 2010 evaluation of the UNDP contribution to environmental management for poverty reduction, which noted that elaboration of safeguards beyond screening could enhance cross-sectoral coordination for poverty evaluation and environmental protection, UNDP decided to institute safeguards as articulated in the management response. The deliberate adoption of social and environmental standards, ahead of the rest of the United Nations system, was one of the reasons that UNDP was able to gain early accreditation to the GCF. The current screening procedures are under review to identify how the screening has informed programme design and to what extent integration of the standards has led to more sustainable results.

15. The evaluation's positive assessment of the performance of UNDP as a GEF implementing partner is evidenced by the $3.13 billion grant investment which UNDP helped to disburse in 143 countries; the grants leveraged another $14.12 billion in co-financing, so that $17.25 billion was invested in the environment and sustainable development priorities of these countries during the Strategic Plan period.

16. The evaluation did not cover the work of UNDP in climate change beyond global and regional processes and support to nationally determined contributions. A fuller picture would have been offered by an analysis of the extensive work on climate change adaptation, forests and the critically important climate mitigation-energy nexus, disaster risk reduction and sustainable energy programming including in post-disaster and conflict recovery settings.

Inclusive and democratic governance

17. UNDP is pleased to receive solid recognition of its contribution to improved governance and State-society engagement including through dialogues with parliaments, Governments and civil society, support to democratic reforms and improved public administration, local access to public information, citizens' participation, accountability, rule of law, electoral systems, peacebuilding and basic service delivery. UNDP also notes the evaluation's conclusion that consolidation of support to conflict prevention, governance and peacebuilding under one unit has enabled a more integrated and holistic approach to building peace and preventing conflict.

18. In response to the evaluation's finding that addressing democratic governance issues at times has been excessively prudent and consequently some opportunities were missed, management wishes to explain that UNDP takes a development approach in responding to country priorities, respecting national ownership and strengthening institutional and individual capacities for full adoption of reforms, led by national actors. In so doing, UNDP aligns itself with the principles of effective development cooperation as reflected in the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action and other global instruments. Fragility-sensitive, risk-informed governance interventions should not be seen as overly cautious approaches or as a leadership deficit.

19. The evaluation's findings and conclusions regarding the critical role of UNDP in advancing democratic governance as an essential driver for inclusive growth, human development, peace and resilience provide the necessary evidence for this area of work.

Resilience building

20. The UNDP commitment to a risk-informed approach to development will continue to guide the formulation and implementation of its strategic plan, programmes and projects. Theories of change will draw systematically on risk analyses, and interventions will integrate fragility-sensitive principles and approaches. Management of risks from prevention to reduction and recovery efforts will remain at the centre of UNDP support to countries and populations in need, in line with the broader United Nations agenda. This support will draw on partnerships that are not limited by corporate structures, similar to the response to the Ebola crisis and other interventions.

Global and regional programmes

21. With respect to the evaluation's findings and conclusions regarding the global and regional programmes, management appreciates the importance of these instruments in positioning UNDP, defining its contributions to global and regional public goods and enabling country-level development progress and integrated results. The programmes allow UNDP to engage in global and regional dialogues, development research and policy consultations with regional and global organizations, and assess opportunities to strengthen its long-term relevance and competitiveness.

22. Management appreciates the evaluation's approach of reviewing the performance of the five regional programmes together, as this has produced findings that are useful both to individual regional bureaux and to UNDP at the corporate level despite major differences in the size, content and objectives of those programmes.

23. Regarding cross-cutting programmatic issues and organizational effectiveness, UNDP remains committed to implementing the management responses to relevant evaluations and the assessment of institutional effectiveness as endorsed by the Executive Board in decision 2017/12.

Annex. Key evaluation recommendations and UNDP management response

Recommendation 1				
Support for fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals should be a cross-cutting issue for all UNDP country offices. Integrated approaches to development are essential for fulfilment of the Goals and should be pursued where possible, taking national contexts and implementation efficiency into consideration.				
Management response: UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP will continue and further expand its support to national partners in integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans, through the MAPS missions and other forms of support together with other United Nations development system partners. UNDP will provide policy support to countries through the application of tools and quantitative methodologies that can help Governments to make informed decisions on prioritization and implementation of the Goals in line with national priorities and context. Upon request from Governments, UNDP is committed to supporting countries in the follow-up and review of progress towards Sustainable Development Goal fulfillment through the voluntary national reviews as part of the formal process that culminates at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Following the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) guidelines for preparation of country-led national Sustainable Development Goal reports and on the request of Governments, UNDP is supporting the production of the first cohort of reports, which include in-depth national and subnational reviews of the countries' processes of monitoring and reviewing national implementation of the Goals.				
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**	**Tracking**	
			Status	**Comments**
Roll out and support the UNDG MAPS approach at in response to national requests, together with UNDG and other development partners	Ongoing (since August 2016; on demand)	Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS); regional bureaux; resident coordinators/resident representatives		
Upon requests from Governments, support countries in efforts to follow-up and review progress towards Goal fulfilment through voluntary national reviews, and support for Sustainable Development Goal country reports.	Ongoing	BPPS and regional bureaux, in support of resident coordinators/resident representatives		

Recommendation 2				
The overarching strategic objective of UNDP — supporting the poorest of the poor and the most marginalized members of society — remains valid. Future resources and programming should aim to help countries accelerate the achievement of development results especially for those left behind, based on fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.				
Management response: UNDP management agrees with this recommendation, and the 2030 Agenda's ambition of "leaving no one behind" will be proposed as an important element of the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, including in the integrated results and resources framework (IRRF). UNDP intends to implement this recommendation through its support to national and local partners on the Sustainable Development Goals, and including through tools and promoting development solutions identified through South-South and triangular cooperation, and fostering partnerships that have a strong potential to harness transformational change and support achievement of the 2030 Agenda on the ground.				
Drawing on practices and lessons learned through programmes and projects, continue the development and support of the conceptual framework and associated tools for a more integrated and effective approach to multidimensional poverty.	Ongoing	Conceptual framework: BPPS; Delivery organization-wide Tools development: BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux		
A corporate "leave no one behind" methodology for tracking excluded groups, targeting and access support to development benefits will be integrated in all results and resources frameworks for programmes and projects.	January 2018	BPPS in consultations with regional bureaux and country offices.		
Recommendation 3				
UNDP should retain its global reach. Programming in middle-income countries should align with the Sustainable Development Goals and other global frameworks, placing vulnerable populations at the forefront while seizing opportunities to expand assistance at subnational levels.				

Management response:

UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in conjunction with the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action, to ensure that countries make effective use of all available resources and means to advance their development goals. Through dedicated methodologies for development finance assessments and integrated financing solutions, UNDP assists Member States in the development of their integrated national financing frameworks linking planning, budgeting, partnerships and resource mobilization as requested by the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action. Recognizing the specific challenges facing middle-income countries (MICs) in continuing development process in a fundamentally different financing environment, UNDP will consider continuing to undertake development finance assessments in MICs.

The new UNDAF guidance, issued in February 2017, informs UNDP programming in MICs and focuses on alignment with global frameworks, in particular the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Agenda for Action. The guidance prioritizes leaving no one behind and financing strategies that ensure continuity in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP will continue supporting localization of the 2030 Agenda as a central focus of support through the MAPS approach.

Continue to support formulation and implementation of UNDAFs addressing context specific challenges and leaving no-one behind	Ongoing	Country offices; tools development: BPPS and Articulation of Territorial Networks Initiative Regional bureaux: country programme development tailored to national contexts and aligned to the Strategic Plan		
Conduct development finance assessments and support development of Integrated National Financing Frameworks in line with the Addis Abeba Agenda for Action	Ongoing	BPPS, regional bureaux, country offices		

Recommendation 4

UNDP should strongly emphasize its climate change adaptation capabilities and services in the next strategic plan. The UNDP national and subnational scope of service, capabilities for urban and rural development planning, governance and risk assessment, experience managing multi-partner trust funds and decades of environmental protection and disaster risk reduction and recovery work provide a platform from which to ably assist national and subnational governments to meet this global development challenge. Specific attention should be paid to the climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction linkages.

Management response:

UNDP management agrees with the recommendation and intends to expand its work in the area of adaptation, in close coordination and synergy with disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts. As the evaluation acknowledged, there has been good progress in integrating the DRR and adaptation portfolios at country and regional levels, which could be further systematized and institutionalized throughout all of UNDP.

In response to the growing demands to support climate action and DRR, UNDP has already scaled up and expanded assistance to countries to integrate climate change adaptation and DRR into their subnational/national policies, plans, and strategies. Efforts towards integrated approaches to climate change adaptation and DRR are being pursued in various regional and country programmes and projects. As the co-facilitator of the United Nations System Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action, member of the Climate Principals Group and member of the Climate Core Group, UNDP will further systematize and institutionalize this integrated approach throughout all policies, programmes and projects and its work with partner agencies and stakeholders.

UNDP is playing an increasingly significant role in supporting countries to mobilize climate finance, including through the GCF, to undertake adaptation actions for climate-resilient development. UNDP is uniquely positioned to accelerate adaptation services, building on its decade-long portfolio, and has been expanding its technical capacity. For instance, GCF project development is being undertaken through expanded task teams that include experts from different technical areas (social and environmental safeguards, gender and economic analysis) to support the scale and scope of adaptation investments to which countries aspire. UNDP will continue to expand its roster of experts to deliver adaptation services at global, regional and national levels.

Develop long-term agreements for roster of experts including climate scientists, safeguard specialists, gender experts, economists, proposal development and various thematic experts.	July 2018	BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux		
Finalize and disseminate the draft integrated strategy note on climate change, DRR and sustainable energy to articulate the UNDP corporate approach and offer on delivering integrated services at global, regional and country levels.	Early 2018	BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux		

Finalize draft tool for practitioners on integrating DRR/climate change adaptation into development planning and budgeting and strengthen the community of practice and relevant knowledge networks	Early 2018	BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux		
Recommendation 5				
Recognizing that governance is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP should be proactive in supporting sectoral governance approaches and more persuasive in promoting democratic governance reforms.				
Management response: UNDP management takes note of the recommendation and concurs that governance is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP strives to be proactive in supporting sectoral governance approaches and to be persuasive in promoting democratic governance reform, while fully recognizing that its support for reforms is based on requests from national Governments in line with national contexts and priorities. UNDP governance work builds on long-standing broad, and innovative partnerships with international, national and local actors to create an enabling environment for sustainable peace and development to take root. For example, the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections is one of the flagship mechanisms that UNDP employs to deliver coordinated rule of law assistance. Co-led by UNDP and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the mechanism brings together the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other United Nations entities to facilitate joint planning and programming and resource mobilization in service of the whole system. UNDP also works with the Department of Political Affairs on conflict prevention and electoral assistance.				
Through engagement in MAPS missions and support to the SDG agenda, identify entry points for innovative sectoral governance approaches and new opportunities to realign programmatic support in democratic governance and conflict prevention as a key enabler of the Sustainable Development	Ongoing	BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux, resident coordinators/resident representatives and country offices		The Inter-Parliamentary Union/UNDP self-assessment toolkit, *Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals* and the UNDP/Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption/Islamic Development Bank handbook, *Parliament's Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development*

Goals				Goals, were launched in 2017. Implementation is planned via parliamentary programming to promote climate action;[1], prevent HIV/AIDS and advance other thematic development priorities.
Through the UNDP partnership with OHCHR and the Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions, scale up joint support to national human rights institutions as key independent bodies to promote and protect human rights and ensure that no-one gets left behind.	Ongoing	BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux, resident coordinators/resident representatives and country offices	On track	A letter of intent between the partners to scale up joint support to national human rights institutions was signed in 2017 and a draft programing approach has been formulated
Recommendation 6				
Analysis of institutional capacities at the national level should guide UNDP governance programming in countries affected by conflict. Governance support needs to be targeted to critical government functions that are essential to stability. UNDP should more strategically support Sustainable Development Goal 16 and related intergovernmental agreements on peacebuilding and State-building.				

[1] See http://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/8847, Evaluation of the EC Contribution to the Parliamentary Action for Renewable Energy (PARE) Project, which found that the project played a key role in the enactment of a sustainability clause in the new Constitution of Tunisia, in doubling the renewable energy budget in India in 2013/2014, and in bringing into effect the Sustainable Energy Development Authority in Bangladesh.

Management response:

UNDP gives specific consideration to this recommendation in its strategic plan, 2018-2021 which is currently under formulation. Given the strategic importance of Goal 16 for the entire 2030 Agenda, UNDP has been instrumental in launching the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Promoting Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, which brings together Member States, civil society and the private sector, supported by a group of United Nations partner entities. UNDP is also closely engaged in the piloting of Goal 16 monitoring in cooperation with the Open Government Partnership and the Community of Democracies.

Recognizing the interconnectedness of the peace and development agendas, UNDP will continue to engage in international networks such as the International Network on Conflict and Fragility, the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building and its strategic relationship with the g7+ group of countries, having signed a memorandum of understanding in 2016. As part of that engagement, UNDP in 2016 developed "SDG-Ready", the UNDP offer on Sustainable Development Goal implementation in fragile situations. UNDP will continue to advocate for the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States internationally as well as at country level, promoting the principles of the New Deal in aid coordination, use of country systems, Sustainable Development Goal implementation, the Sustaining Peace Agenda and peacebuilding and State-building efforts.

In June, 2017 the United Nations and the World Bank completed and officially released the first joint diagnostic framework on core government functions in fragile and conflict-affected settings, for which UNDP has played a leading role within the United Nations system. The framework includes a set of joint principles for assessing critical government functions that are essential to stability, peacebuilding and State-building processes. Its objective is to provide an initial assessment of key issues, priorities and entry points around the six core government functions of executive coordination at the centre of government, local governance, public financial management, civil service, security sector and aid management. UNDP is already providing support in a number of countries based on the diagnostic, including the Central African Republic, Libya and South Sudan, and initial discussions are underway to apply some aspects in Cameroon and Yemen. UNDP is working through the Inter-Agency Platform on Core Government Functions (co-chaired by UNDP and the Department of Political Affairs) to embed this framework in existing assessment and planning processes such as recovery and peacebuilding assessments and conflict-related development analyses.

Continue to engage in international forums on peacebuilding and State-building.	Ongoing	BPPS (Strategic Positioning Unit (SPU), Governance and Peacebuilding Unit		
Apply core government function diagnostic framework in fragile and conflict-affected countries	Ongoing	BPPS/Governance and Peacebuilding in collaboration with regional bureaux, resident coordinators/resident representatives and country offices		

Recommendation 7				
UNDP should retain resilience as a distinct area of work under the next strategic plan so that stakeholders see this remaining a core area of the UNDP service offering. To strengthen the coherence of its crisis risk-reduction and recovery support, UNDP should continue to refine the roles and scope of service of BPPS and the Crisis Response Unit.				
Management response: UNDP agrees with the recommendation and will consider its approach to resilience building in the next strategic plan, 2018-2021, drawing on findings and recommendations of an external evaluation of the lessons learned from its role in early recovery coordination. The UNDP approach to early recovery coordination will be revisited in light of the QCPR and the New Way of Working. UNDP takes note of the recommendation about strengthening the coherence of its crisis prevention and recovery support, while recognizing that details regarding potential reforms of the United Nations peace and security architecture and wider development system will also guide UNDP work in these areas.				
Review any financial, organizational and structural implications stemming from the new strategic plan, the SG priorities and wider United Nations reforms, to ensure a strong, coherent/integrated and well-resourced UNDP approach on crisis prevention, response and recovery.	Q1 2018	Executive Office/BPPS/CRU/RBx		
Recommendation 8				
UNDP should strengthen implementation of its gender policies, taking measures to ensure adequate funding to mainstream gender across all programming areas. Work on gender equality and women's empowerment should not be confined to a gender team alone but should ensure that all large programmes have dedicated gender expertise. Specific attention needs to be paid to such areas as environment, energy and crisis response, where gender mainstreaming remains weak.				
Management response: UNDP agrees with the recommendation and aims to address it in the forthcoming gender equality strategy which will include a more robust gender architecture, stronger accountability mechanisms and budgetary commitments as well as reporting targets. Progress will be reported through a strengthened Gender Steering and Implementation Committee and the annual report to the Executive Board. Emphasis will be placed on				

strengthening partnerships with UN-Women and other technical partners to deliver gender results across all programming areas.				
Formulate the new gender equality strategy to incorporate recommended actions and mainstream gender across thematic areas and present it to the Executive Board at the first regular session 2018 in line with the new strategic plan, 2018-2021	January 2018	BPPS/Gender Team		
Recommendation 9				
UNDP should take a more systematic approach to South-South cooperation, selecting specific areas and partners for expanded cooperation.				
Management response: UNDP agrees with the recommendation and commits to strengthening its systematic approach to South-South and triangular cooperation through leveraging opportunities offered by the implementation of the South-South cooperation corporate strategy. Through its strategic roles (knowledge broker, capacity builder and partnership facilitator), UNDP will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by continuously taking stock of the challenges facing developing countries, systematically fostering exchanges and partnerships, supporting policy frameworks and institutional capacities, stimulating targeted research to inform global policy dialogues and relying more heavily on country programming as an efficient way to leverage South-South cooperation at the national level. In addition, UNDP continues to support the UN Development System through hosting the UN Office for South-South cooperation.				
Strengthen country programming to ensure systematic mainstreaming of South-South cooperation in all programme frameworks as an enabler of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.	Mid-2018 for training and guidance for regional bureaux and country offices, then each country programme document cycle until end-2021	BPPS Development Impact Group (DIG) and Headquarters Project Appraisal Committee secretariat with support of regional bureaux		
Develop and roll out a support package to strengthen national	December 2019	BPPS DIG in consultation with regional bureaux		

capacities to access and expand South-South cooperation based on country typologies				
Recommendation 10				
UNDP should change the global programme into a service line for supporting staff positions at global and regional levels, as its shared deliverables and blurred boundaries make it unsuitable as a specific programme.				
Management response: UNDP management takes note of the recommendation. The relevance and role of programmatic instruments including the global and regional programmes will be further reviewed in the coming year(s). UNDP will explore the idea of converting the current global programme into a service line as one of the options going forward.				
Explore and select viable option and submit required documentation to the Executive Board	By January 2018	BPPS, BMS and the Executive Office		
Recommendation 11				
UNDP should determine specialties within its sustainable development, governance and resilience areas of work. This will help it build world-class technical expertise and focus its resources on building capacities in those areas.				
Management response: UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP is committed to having world-class technical expertise in the areas of sustainable development, governance and resilience. Once the new strategic plan is endorsed by the Executive Board later this year, UNDP will identify the specialized capacities needed to best implement these stated priorities and support country offices to respond to the priorities of national partners. The UNDP knowledge management strategy, which the evaluation recognizes as "comprehensive" and providing "considerable emphasis recognized as on knowledge facilitation and learning", asks UNDP to leverage knowledge management for identification, development, mobilization and management of talent and expertise in ways that allow the organization to draw from a pool of qualified practitioners and experts at any time, mobilize staff members to be available for ad-hoc initiatives and virtual projects. To realize this vision, UNDP is investing in the development of an improved, cost-effective mechanism to map and track staff expertise across the organization. Through improved personnel profiles and searches, this offering aims to assist staff and managers to identify expertise rapidly and systematically. This will also allow tracking of expertise to assess strengths and weaknesses in order to build and bolster capacities where needed. Regional bureaux will continue developing and implementing Sustainable Development Goal toolkits, and investing in the capacity of UNDP staff and other partners through trainings, community of practice meetings, and others.				

Review UNDP technical expertise against the priorities identified in the new strategic plan and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and develop an action plan for training and learning to address any gaps in capacity arising.	Mid-2018	BPPS/Governance and Peacebuilding Unit BPPS/Sustainable Development Unit BPPS/Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Unit in consultation with Executive Office and regional bureaux		
Continue development of a staff expertise mapping and search system ("PeopleSearch") to enable offices to easily locate subject matter experts and for UNDP to assess expertise globally against priority areas.	Q1 2018	BPPS/DIG Bureau of Management Services/Office of Information Management Services, Office of Human Resources		
Recommendation 12				
UNDP should reassess the roles and financial sustainability of the regional hubs, striving to make them centres of excellence for innovation and learning while expanding cooperation and partnerships with regional institutions. It should reduce overlap between regional and country-level programming.				
Management response: UNDP management takes note of this recommendation and will review the financial sustainability and roles of the regional hubs over the next Strategic Plan 2018-2021.				
Review financial sustainability of regional hubs	2018 -21	Executive Office/regional bureaux/BPPS		
Recommendation 13				
Regional programming, if better defined, has the potential to be a valuable tool to prioritize and organize UNDP regional engagement and support to country offices. UNDP should develop its regional programmes as frameworks, outlining the regional issues to be addressed and approaches to be followed. To maximize its activities at the regional level and position UNDP to make a meaningful contribution, there should be more focus on a select number of areas at the regional level. For regional programmes to be effective, the activities that are considered should be realistic and pay sufficient attention to regionality principles.				

Management response:
Management agrees with the recommendation that regional programmes should be developed as frameworks outlining the regional issues to be addressed and approaches to be followed within a select number of areas in support of the 2030 Agenda.

Formulation of the regional programmes, 2018-2021, guided by the 2030 Agenda will support distinct and specific regional public goods	January 2018	Regional bureaux		

Recommendation 14

UNDP should promote a results culture that encourages critical reflection and continuous organizational learning for improved results and institutional effectiveness.

Management response:

UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. As the Executive Board noted in several decisions, UNDP has made significant progress in strengthening its analytical capacities. To build a strong results culture across the organization, UNDP will streamline its results architecture, reporting and performance analysis systems to allow all parts of the organization to use results and evidence for learning and strategic decisions. During the current Strategic Plan cycle, UNDP developed an integrated corporate planning system to manage the programme and inform development and institutional performance analyses. The strength of the UNDP programme management was well recognized in the results-based management audit conducted by OAI in 2016, which rated the system satisfactory, the highest rate possible and the first to have been received for results-based management. To inform the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, UNDP also conducted analyses of lessons learned from results-oriented annual reports and decentralized evaluations. A complete roll-out of an upgraded knowledge sharing infrastructure; and the relaunch of the UNDP pubic library of knowledge products along with new mechanisms to measure their quality, reach and impact also took place within this strategic plan timeframe.

To ensure programme management and evaluation support learning, UNDP works on: (a) designing a tool for capturing quality lessons learned in the corporate system and the Evaluation Resource Centre; (b) fostering exchange and learning through recently relaunched knowledge networks and an improved corporate social networking platform, in addition to a newly established One United Nations network for inter-agency collaboration, exchange and learning (as per a recommendation of the QCPR); and (c) offering dedicated training and outreach to empower staff to use these mechanisms effectively for learning and knowledge exchange. UNDP has taken practical steps to operationalize self-learning from experiments, from what works and what does not, through the establishment of the Innovation Facility in 2014. A key component of the mandate of this facility is the provision of risk capital and advisory services to country offices to test new approaches to solve development problems. The Innovation Facility documents successes, learning and lessons in its annual reviews and through regular blogging by offices supported by the facility.

Streamline results monitoring, reporting and analysis systems allowing all units to view and analyse UNDP-wide results and resources data (by strategic plan outcomes/ outputs, countries, country typologies, etc.) for learning and decision-making	Q3 2018	BPPS/DIG and Executive Office		
Strengthen UNDP analytical tools and capacities in order to ensure evidence-based decision-making at corporate, regional and country office levels	Q4 2019	BPPS/DIG and Executive Office		
Recommendation 15				
UNDP should increase the involvement of the Office of Human Resources (OHR) in strategic decision-making, especially in future institutional restructuring. Given the increasing complexity of programme delivery, inter-agency work and collaboration with a range of partners including civil society, investment in developing skills in leadership, relationship management and management across complex systems should be prioritized.				
Management response: UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP is committed to ensuring pivotal importance of human resources matters, including OHR representation at early stages of decision-making.				
In 2017, a training programme for newly appointed resident representative focused on leadership development in complex environment and collaboration with partners.	2017	OHR	Completed	
Leadership development programmes (LDP) invest	Ongoing			LDP I / II (ongoing) LDP III

in developing skills in complex problem solving, relationship and partnership development for managers and supervisors. supervisors and managers to develop skills including in complex problem solving, in relationship building and in partnership building.				(2018)
Recommendation 16				
UNDP should transition from political budgeting to a more risk- and results-based budgeting process, to more effectively link results to resources. This will help mobilize funds and better highlight investment gaps to donors. UNDP is being held accountable to a corporate strategic plan without predictable and adequate resources. UNDP should work with funders and influence groups to raise understanding of the unintended effects of reductions in core funding. Focus should be on bringing the donor community together to work more effectively on integrated multidimensional approaches to support fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, while contributing to partner country priorities.				
Management response: The UNDP management concurs with this recommendation. To build solid results to resources linkages, UNDP will strengthen its results based budgeting process through the analysis of demand (from country programme documents) and supply (from pipelines and donor intelligence). To better analyze resources invested and results achieved, UNDP will establish a close link between the IRRF indicator targets and the resource plan in the Integrated Budget, which will enable the organization to analyze investment gaps and facilitate dialogue with stakeholders.				
Set baselines, milestones and targets for IRRF indicators by linking BMTs with the corporate resource plan	Q1 2018	BPPS/DIG, BMS/Office of Finance and Resource Management (OFRM), Executive Office		
Analyse resources invested and results achieved to identify investment gaps during the midterm review of the strategic plan	Q1 2019	BPPS/DIG, BMS/OFRM, Executive Office		

In line with corporate RM strategy for the new SP, introduce a partnership, pipeline and resource mobilization strategy as part of programme development to identify resource gaps that are critical to deliver the results of the programme, and to advocate with funding partners based on the investment gap.	Q1 2018	BPPS/DIG and Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy		